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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Al-Ayn Social Care Foundation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[25 May 2018]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Challenges of Phase

Al-Ayn Social Care Foundation (ASCF) is an organization which works to give orphaned children in Iraq the tools they need to fulfil their potential at each stage of their lives. If ASCF as an organization was able to reach its own full potential, we believe it could change the lives of the needy, orphaned children, and their families, and rectify some of the ills caused by terrorism in Iraq. Terrorism which has brought about genocide, kidnapping, and bondage, has left behind widows and orphaned children, and has led to the recruitment of children, who represent the community's hopes for the future.

The victims' lives can go one of two ways – they can either go on to contribute meaningfully to their communities or unfortunately, they can become destructive to their communities as a result of what they have experienced. As children, orphaned children have their whole lives ahead of them. They are entitled to their due rights, so that they can in turn contribute to the development of a healthy and successful civil society.

We look forward to seeing our orphaned children become well-rounded citizens, contributing positively to their society. We do not want the streets to become incubators for terrorism, crime, modern-day maladies and drug addiction. ASCF seeks to cooperate with all parties working to the same end of caring for orphaned children and sees itself as part of a global network working to assist orphaned children.

ASCF works at a grassroots level to provide care to those targeted by terrorism. We work under the ethos that it is essential to apply all the international standards of human rights, especially the agreements concerning children's rights, to the work we do. We believe a human rights based approach is a key factor in the creation of a healthy civil society, as based on those principles, justice and equal rights for all can be maintained. To achieve its goals, ASCF has engaged in various projects across Iraq, detailed below, and plans to continue this work in the future.

ASCF's Achievements at Psychological Level:

When children are exposed, at the early stages of life, to losing one parent or both parents, they can develop depression due to the lack of compassion they have experienced or their poor social relations. They may be driven to using violence, and experience serious mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, fear, nervousness, and post-traumatic stress disorder. A general loss of hope in life, lack of motivation and overwhelming pessimism can lead to children not performing to their full potential at school, in turn leading to a low standard of education being obtained.

ASCF has been providing psychological treatment for those cases registered with the organization. A total of 1,178 individuals, in Baghdad alone, have been treated at the Psychological Rehabilitation Department affiliated with the Luminous Stars Center, established by ASCF.

ASCF sought to create other specialized centers to assist those with mental health issues and psychological needs, and so the Hikayati Center, the first of its kind in Iraq, is a new initiative launched by ASCF. The aim of the center is to focus on the psychological rehabilitation of orphaned children, working towards remedying some of the symptoms experienced by these orphaned children as a result of the lack of compassion they have received previously in their lives. We hope to nurture and develop the characters of orphaned children so they become balanced, secure and self-confident individuals.

ASCF's Further Educational Achievements:

We aim to contribute to building a stable civil society, focusing on developing all aspects of a child's needs, equipping orphaned children with knowledge and skills to enable them to make their own choices, whilst contributing themselves to a strong and better society.

Through our work, we have also participated in working towards some of the objectives of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which are hoped to be fulfilled by 2030, as envisaged by world leaders in September 2015 in a historical universal summit. The objectives included eradicating poverty and famine of all forms, and ensuring inclusive and quality education for all, as the foundation for improving people's lives and sustainable development.

ASCF reiterates its commitment and adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, principles of International Law, covenants, conventions and agreements on human rights in general, and those relating to children's rights in particular. We believe that peace, security and prosperity at the national and international levels for any society

can only be achieved through respecting human rights, maintaining fundamental freedoms and applying all agreements and treaties in this respect.

We are also committed to the provisions of the Iraqi Constitution which aim at protecting the rights of women and children, some of which are listed below:

- Article 29- First (B) guarantees the protection of motherhood and childhood, and indicates that mothers and children should be provided with the appropriate conditions to further their talents and abilities.

  Article 30- First stipulates that the state guarantees to the individual and the family -- especially children and women -- social and health security and the basic requirements for leading a free and dignified life. The competent authorities have provided the above with support and assistance; however, these fall below the standard required due to the fact that the authorities lack a thoroughly-studied mechanism to address the crisis and accommodate the enormous number of affected individuals. This objective requires extra efforts by all state entities and NGOs which represent the people's voice.

- Article 29-Third prohibits the economic exploitation of children and guarantees their protection. It is imperative that officials and decision makers should allocate sufficient sustained financial resources for this purpose, to ensure children can engage in continuous academic or vocational education.

At the international level, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by UN in 1989, is considered the first universal legal collection of human rights with regards to children where the governments' responsibilities towards their own children are identified. Below are some of the provisions of this legal treaty most relevant to the work of ASCF:

- Articles 23, 29 & 31 bind the signatory states to provide the requirements of care and education, and underlines the importance of developing the child's characters and skills and preparing them as leaders .

- Article 39 obliges the state to rehabilitate children and ensure the integration of the victims of exploitation and armed conflicts into the community. Here, it is important to specify the requirements of entertainment, cultural and scientific activities and relief of repression caused by the misfortunes they experienced.

The centers established by ASCF and other centers under construction seek to avoid such crises as armed conflict and exploitation. Overall, we consider our work to be aligned with the objectives and values enshrined in international human rights treaties, most notably the Convention on the Rights of Children.

We also note the recommendations reported by the working team concerned with the regular comprehensive review, to the Human Rights Council, session 28, on 12.12.2014, which urge Iraq to comply with the provisions of the Children's Rights Convention, while in its recommendation nos. 127-51 & 127-59, Iraq is urged to enhance its educational and social systems, and provide appropriate food, housing and health and psychological services.

Finally, we take this opportunity to make the following recommendations to the Human Rights Council for the purposes of further protecting and enhancing the rights of children in Iraq, especially orphaned:

1. The Human Rights Council should establish a special independent committee concerned with caring for children, and in particular orphaned ones. This committee should include many NGOs with ASCF acting as a pioneer in it, given that ASCF has accumulated extensive expertise in its work for orphaned children. The committee should in no way be employed for political or partisan purposes and should act in accordance with all international laws.

2. Centers of social, educational, and psychological rehabilitation should be established following ASCF's Luminous Stars and Hikayati projects as models. They should be dispersed all over the governorates and seek to re-integrate those who have been neglected into the community. The centers should be built to accommodate the huge numbers of the afflicted in order to allow those who are assisted to become future leaders .

3. The rehabilitation centers should be provided with all the programs and modern supplies required in order to reduce the gap between the children and community due to a lack of compassion. The international organizations concerned will meet the needs of those centers, while ASCF will coordinate in this respect in view of its long experience in supporting those elements of society and establishing such centers.

4. ASCF is willing to host the first constitutional meeting for the Widows and Orphaned Children Care Council at its premises in Baghdad, where the first steps are to be taken to determine the Center's requirements and activities, and the Council's bylaws are to be considered.